

accident, or spring out of old patterns by self-evolution and spontaneous growth. So far true, doubtless, that Ham in Ethiopia and Japhet in Gothland might, equally with Shem, who settled beside his father at home, think first of the old home-pattern for everything else as well as his house: but with different sky overhead and different earth underfoot and different things around in every shape, that which formed the old pattern for the old home now formed a new one for the new; and the different nations built different houses for themselves. The hunter and the shepherd drove stakes into the ground, and covered them with skins, and tied them with thongs; the cultivator in the north piled up a grotto of stones; the dweller in the marsh wove wattle-work of canes, and coated it with mud.

The several buildings of the nations having been thus originated, as men advanced in ingenuity their houses increased in contrivance. Tools were invented and crafts learned; and the story of building progressed step by step with constant improvement. But all this history is among the unrecorded history of the world, and we lose it, and must take it up again where records begin,—although the loss is perhaps of no mighty moment either, as the story is simply this,—that for their chief and lasting material the foremost in building at length adopted stones; and ingenuity found means for hewing them from the rock, shaping them with tools, building them up in structure, and even carving them in ornament. How much of this had been done before the works which still stand as memorials and first examples for our history, of course we can only guess at; and if we would (as it is our purpose to do) inquire into the spirit of the practice of various times,—the right and wrong, better and worse, of their building,—we can commence practically only with the commencement of definite record, and turn to Egypt and India.

By this time men had multiplied into myriads, and had been tossed about by the troublous agencies of rude humanity, till they had gathered themselves into governments, and constructed schemes of law and order, and constituted dignities and rule, and formed national interests and aims and purposes. Otherwise no structures of theirs could have lived throughout so many centuries as to our day. But live they do, and in magnitude and vastness of patient labour enough to startle the mind and to proclaim them as the work, not of uncultivated or barbarian men, but of mighty peoples, well advanced in practised ingenuity and studied wisdom of the mind.

In early philosophies these two agencies—the truthful thinking of the mind untrammelled, and the feeble thinking of the mind too much restricted to individual resources—combine to produce a species of powerful thought and simple wisdom, self-involved all the while in superstitious faith and misleading fancy, which is so different from the system in which we live at the present day—of truth, by the mere discovery of error, and error through established traditional educational obliquity of judgment—that we can hardly form a proper estimate of the spirit of ancient nations at all. The expositor and guiding teacher of our day, in almost every branch of knowledge, is the old-fashioned man,—he who carries in his heart and soul simply traditions—the institutions of his fathers, the dicta of their records and remains, most filial reverence for their venerable ways. And although the self-important soothsayer of old Egypt, musing moodily over a fable as he stalked among the reverential crowd, might seem not much removed in practical influence from the spirit of our old-fashioned man, yet we shall find that the ancient teacher, weak and consequential as he was, was perhaps less doggedly preventive of progress than is the modern; and, half-seeing, as he must have been, was perhaps less obstinately dull of sight. What are the differences of influence between the ancient spirit and the modern we need not care to inquire, till we come to look into the peculiar weaknesses of the modern; in the meantime we shall inquire into the strength and vigour of the ancient, and shall find peculiarities there which it will be useful to trace. For the strength and vigour of the ancient is more positive,—that of the modern, more negative; the ancient weaknesses are more negative—want of light,

not blindness,—the modern weaknesses more positive. The modern disciplinarian is a dutiful son teaching children,—the ancient disciplinarian was a father teaching men.

Therefore, in the building of the ancient nations—the Hindoos, the Egyptians, the Persians, and (judging from what record we possess of their works) the Jews—we observe, in the midst of all that which we call rudeness and crudity, and notwithstanding the similarity which circumstances produced in their systems, a boldness and originality of fancy which causes us only to regret that their record is so imperfect. He assured that they were mighty thinkers—the wise men of that old day,—in spite of their fetishism and astrology and omen-seeking, men in real original comprehension of pure truth beyond our reach,—their weaknesses the wants of opening life, our strength the mere experience of age,—their strength the vigour of youth, our weakness the feebleness of dotage.

The building of the great Assyrians, and several other nations of those ages, seems to be utterly without memorial,—perhaps from the destructiveness of war; and the works of those nations of whom memorials are extant—in India, Egypt, and Persia,—together with those of the Jews, from the idea we are able to form of them from the description of the temple—sufficiently clear to be reconcilable with the idiosyncrasy of the family,—these works, although possessed of strongly marked distinctive features of original conception, are still, so far as our present history is concerned, to be taken as one class and step in building.

The material here is stone. The common edifices of these nations, we are reasonably allowed to think, were of some wood construction, upon the analogy of the accounts of building operations given throughout the Old Testament writings; but what were the principles followed we are quite unable particularly to ascertain, as no remains of such building exist, even in description. The imperishable stone, however, of the temples of Egypt and India is a perfect record, and in these we have our earliest specimens of the great building works of man.

It is folly to teach that architecture sprang from religious feeling—that churches are its noblest means of art—that nothing else is truly worthy of its name, and so forth; but it is undoubtedly true that, with those old nations, it was in their temples to divinity that their skill was most powerfully exerted, and all the resources of the mind most fully brought into requisition. The sentiment of religious veneration was the strongest of which the human mind was then possessed. And this, notwithstanding all the bloodshed and tyranny of those times, for the reason simply that their religion was based on different principles from ours. To build a house to Deity must have been a work always of great virtue, and not to be lightly undertaken or slightly performed; but to raise a mighty temple, like those of Thebes, in world-enduring stone, was a purpose to inspire a generation and spread wonder and envy through the world.

And we must not forget their tombs. Next to the mightiness of the temple of Deity, came the solemn grandeur of the mausoleum of the dead. Great men and heroes died and were buried, and venerating worshippers built over them everlasting monuments. And kings, too, built mausoleums for themselves; and put forth their utmost power, while they lived, to secure the utmost perpetuation of their fame when they should be dead. The poor man raised over the grave of his son a carved and painted post, commended it to the care of the unseen agencies, and had thus recorded for an age his honour of the departed; but Pharaoh brought ten thousand slaves, and built a pyramid or hewed a vast cavern in the mountain, and set up images and carved pompous inscriptions, and ordained that a nation should follow him to burial and seal up the mighty tomb, for the opening of astonished men when thousands of years had gone by.

No less exalted sentiments than these could account for the stupendous ruins we behold. We turn, then, to examine the spirit of their building.

The material may be taken, then, as simply stone (what brick structure remains is quite insignificant), and the principles evolved are worthy of study. Some antiquaries appear to

think that the edifices or works more properly built, succeeded and were moulded after the cavern works, or those more properly excavated,—that these ancient builders of Egypt and India formed their first temples and tombs as excavations in the rock, and built their structural temples and tombs at an after date, and followed the old excavational model. But this is only another manifestation of our old enemy, the prejudice against human ingenuity. If such had been their mode of operation, we should not have had it to say, as we have it to say, that their principles were worthy of study, but quite the reverse. A cavern dug out of the solid rock, and a house built up of stones, are things of very widely different principles; and to say that these ancients knew no better than to build up their houses of stone after the model of the caves their fathers hewed out of the mountain, however consistent such procedure would be with the spirit of modern fancy, is a libel. More likely it is that they were somewhat to blame in copying in their excavation-works the forms of their building-work, as we may observe in the larger cavern temples in the straight lintel and flat ceiling, and the too column-like pier; and it is, of course, no argument to tell us how manifestly, if it be so, the caverns are all more ancient than the buildings,—because we can reply that there have been previous buildings of which no trace remains. The massiveness of their building work, which in some eyes seems deducible from an imitation of the cavern work, is properly to be referred to the simplicity of their mind, their small experience, and their purpose of mightiness and enduring strength. If their building had been fashioned on a cavern model, we should have seen a ponderous gothic, with heavy vaults and huge buttresses. Instead of this, however, the style of building is exactly in accordance with the principles of the material, large stone, courts of great columns, and great walls, with great lintel work of small span.

The same unbelievers in man's intellectuality, of whose theories we have already complained, tell us again that the Egyptian principle of the inclining wall is copied from the pyramids. And in this they would deprive us of a feature of excellence and characteristic spirit which we ought to be allowed particularly to set down to the credit of these old architects. Those of us who have never visited the Nile, if we can divest our minds of the Piccadilly specimen, and paint in the fancy the full effect of such a structure as that of Apollinopolis Magna, will give to the inclining wall the merit of one of its best principles of simple structural beauty. If anticipation be admitted in our history, let us observe that the mediæval architects possessed it in another form, and relied upon it as a grand part of their system; and even in almost the same form in such a case as the simple round tower of the early churches, and the towers of their castellated structures. In the works of the classic styles also, and in the Italian sometimes, it is equally present. So that we must not say that the old Egyptians copied it from the accident of their pyramids, but give them the honest credit of an excellent principle which later builders equally approved after them, and which it is worth our while to study for our own improvement, happening to be deficient therein.

Still, however, this principle in the Egyptian works, in its fullness and precise management, is quite different from the others we have mentioned. It is a broad-based, bold, strong principle, in particular force, imparting to the structure its broad-based, bold, strong character, with a virtue peculiar to those buildings beyond all buildings of the after world, as the mind of man itself seems to have been more simply massive in its vigour in these old days than ever since.

The direct result of the manner of building under review is grandeur in magnitude and simplicity; and the details of structure and decoration were calculated fully to carry it out. The enrichment, in the best works, was simple and severe, rude in design, merely because design was in its infancy; but, although often without principle, seldom averse to truth.

In the late works of the period—chiefly in Persia and India, when more of luxury and refinement had crept into the habits of the people—more of endeavour after elegance is observable, and more enrichment and intricacy;